CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1.   A method of controlling access to resources, said method

5   comprising:

storing a policy decision for a resource in local memory, said policy

decision received from a source of policy definitions, said policy decision based

on a policy definition governing access to said resource and on requestor

identifying information provided to said source;

10   receiving a request for access to said resource, said request comprising

said requestor identifying information; and

evaluating said request using said policy decision in said local memory

instead of referring said request to said source for evaluation.

15   2.   The method of Claim 1 wherein said resource is affiliated with

another resource, and wherein further a policy decision for said other resource

is received from said source and stored in local memory.

3.   The method of Claim 1 further comprising:

20   receiving from said source a notification of a change in said policy

definition.

4.   The method of Claim 3 wherein said notification identifies

resources affected by said change.

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5.   The method of Claim 3 wherein said notification also comprises an

updated version of said policy decision based on said change.

6.   The method of Claim 3 further comprising:

marking said policy decision subject to said change; and

requesting an updated version of said policy decision in response to a

5   subsequent request for said resource.

7.   The method of Claim 1 further comprising:

sending a message to said source, said message requesting updates for

policy decisions stored in said memory.

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8.   The method of Claim 1 wherein a period of time said policy

decision is valid is also received from said source and stored locally.

9.   The method of Claim 1 wherein a condition associated with said

15   policy definition is also received from said source and stored locally, wherein

said condition is enforced locally.

10.   A method of controlling access to resources, said method

comprising:

20   receiving a request for access to a resource, said request comprising

requestor identifying information, wherein said request is referred to a source of

a policy definition that governs access to said resource for evaluation;

receiving from said source a policy decision for said resource, said policy

decision based on said policy definition and said requestor identifying

25   information; and

storing said policy decision in local memory, wherein a subsequent request for said resource is evaluated locally using said policy decision stored in memory.

5   11.   The method of Claim 10 wherein said resource is affiliated with another resource, wherein a policy decision for said other resource is received from said source and stored in local memory.

12.   The method of Claim 10 further comprising:
10   receiving from said source a notification of a change in said policy definition.

13.   The method of Claim 12 wherein said notification identifies resources affected by said change.
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14.   The method of Claim 12 wherein said notification also comprises an updated version of said policy decision based on said change.

15.   The method of Claim 12 further comprising:
20   marking said policy decision subject to said change; and
requesting an updated version of said policy decision in response to a subsequent request for said resource.

16.   The method of Claim 10 further comprising:
25   sending a message to said source, said message requesting updates to policy decisions stored in said memory.

17.   The method of Claim 10 further comprising:

receiving information that identifies a period of time said policy decision

is valid.

5   18.   The method of Claim 10 further comprising:

receiving from said source a condition associated with said policy

definition, wherein said condition is enforced locally.

         19.   A computer-usable medium having computer-readable program

10   code embodied therein for causing a computer system to perform a method of

controlling access to resources, said method comprising:

storing in memory a policy decision for a first resource, said policy

decision received from a source of policy definitions, said policy decision based

on a policy definition governing access to said first resource and on requestor

15   identifying information provided to said source;

receiving a request for access to said first resource, said request

comprising said requestor identifying information; and

evaluating said request using said policy decision stored in said memory

instead of referring said request to said source for evaluation.

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         20.   The computer-usable medium of Claim 19 wherein said first

resource is affiliated with another resource, wherein a policy decision for said

other resource is received from said source and stored in local memory.

25   21.   The computer-usable medium of Claim 19 wherein said computer-

readable program code embodied therein causes said computer system to

perform said method comprising:

receiving from said source a notification of a change in said policy definition.

22. The computer-usable medium of Claim 19 wherein said computer-readable program code embodied therein causes said computer system to perform said method comprising:

sending a message to said source, said message requesting updates for policy decisions stored in said memory.

23. The computer-usable medium of Claim 19 wherein a period of time said policy decision is valid is also received from said source and stored locally.

24. The computer-usable medium of Claim 19 wherein a condition associated with said policy definition is also received from said source and stored locally, wherein said condition is enforced locally.

25. The computer-usable medium of Claim 19 wherein said computer-readable program code embodied therein causes said computer system to perform said method comprising:

receiving a request for access to a second resource, said request comprising said requestor identifying information;

providing said requestor identifying information to a source of a policy definition that governs access to said second resource;

receiving from said source a policy decision for said second resource, said policy decision for said second resource based on said policy definition

that governs said second resource and said requestor identifying information; and

storing said policy decision for said second resource in said memory, wherein a subsequent request for said second resource is evaluated using said

5   policy decision stored in said memory.